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Hello everyone!

On behalf of the Society of American Archivists' Technical Subcommittee for Encoded Archival Standards, I welcome you to this call to action as part of the upcoming major revision of the Encoded Archival Description, or EAD. We would like to invite you to engage with a draft of the new version, EAD 4.0, between December 2023 and February 2024, ahead of the public call for comments. For this activity, we are specifically looking towards archival aggregators and software developers.

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And my name is Venkat Srinivasan, a member of the TS-EAS EAD sub-team.

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First, a little background. This revision of EAD started in 2021. It follows the major revision cycles defined by the Standards Committee of the Society of American Archivists, SAA, and it is conducted by the Technical Subcommittee on Encoded Archival Standards, or TS-EAS.

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As we mentioned, the process started in 2021, to understand the status quo, and where things are at with EAD3 and EAD 2002. A process of alignment with the EAC-CPF 2.0 standard took place throughout 2022, in parallel to TS-EAS exploring a standard for functions. Both of these lead up to a review of EAD concepts this year. The first draft of EAD 4.0 will be published in the first quarter of 2024, and kept open for feedback throughout the second quarter. Later in 2024, this feedback will be reviewed in order to finalize EAD 4.0, which will continue into 2025. All going well, EAD 4.0 will be published in the third quarter of 2025.

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As of now, one key challenge is that two versions of EAD are used in parallel. EAD 2002 and EAD3 find significant use across the community. More broadly, EAD today is perhaps primarily used in two ways: one, as an exchange format, and two, in hand-coding scenarios. The first, EAD's strength as a format that enables interoperability, is in particular a reason to highlight the role of aggregators and software developers, and the EAD draft process will really benefit from input from these communities.

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The revision has been built on a few different focus areas, including an intent to align with EAD's sibling standard, EAC-CPF 2.0, and following up on TS-EAS' exploration of a standard to describe functions. This has been embedded in a general review of current conversations around areas like born-digital data and support for Linked Data vocabularies, which also means that there is a close watch and attempt to relate to other standards, especially the Records in

Contexts Conceptual Model (RiC-CM) and Ontology (RiC-O) version 1.0 as published in December 2023.

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That brings us to your input. We would love your feedback so that:

1. EAD 4.0's benefits better align with community requirements
2. These benefits of EAD 4.0 outweigh the overall challenge of an upgrade to a new version – i.e. there is a strong incentive to move to EAD 4.0.
3. We know how we can best advise you about preparing to move to EAD 4.0.

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Of course, we welcome comments from everyone. But through this current effort, we are conscious that EAD is used largely as an exchange format. So, we are looking for tailored feedback from two groups:

1. Aggregators that pull in archival data from a variety of archives, museums and libraries using EAD in their workflow
2. Software developers and software providers - looking at tools, scripts and code that ties in to EAD.

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By engaging with us in this phase, you will get a sneak preview of the draft of the new version of EAD, before the public call for comments is launched in the first quarter of 2024. Apart from commenting on the draft, we will ask you to participate through smaller groups in one or two meetings online, and to possibly contribute to a public webinar about EAD 4.0 in March 2024.

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Here is how 2024 will look in detail:

We'll be sharing a sneak preview of EAD 4.0 with the group replying to this call to action in January 2024. In smaller groups we will meet to review this during January and February, while the public call for comments will be launched later in February 2024. This leads us to a phase where we solicit feedback from the broader community and also hold a public webinar in March 2024. The feedback will continue through to July 2024, and during this time, there will also be public drop-in sessions. Starting August 2024, things will be put in place to finalise EAD 4.0.

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EAD is your exchange format and it needs your input to make it work for everyone. So, please do consider getting in touch and working with the EAD sub-team. We have set up a survey to hear from you, and it won't take more than two minutes to complete. To get to the survey, you can scan the code you see on the screen, or head to the link on the screen

(<https://bit.ly/ead4-survey>, all small letters). Or simply email us at ts-eas@archivists.org. Thank you and we look forward to the discussions!